Interview with Keith Earl Adamson

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KEITH EARL ADAMSON

Interviewed by: Earl Wilson

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BioSketch

Q: Keith, give us a little background, where you were, born, educated, and so on, before you joined the Agency.

ADAMSON: I was born in Newton, Kansas, in 1917, raised, on a farm in Kansas, went through elementary and high school, at Sedgwick High School and graduated. Sedgwick is in Harvey County. In Sedgwick County, just south, is Wichita, Kansas, named after an early colonel who led troops out in that area in the “old days.” After high school, I went to two years of college at York College in York, Nebraska. Couldn't afford that during the Depression, so I went to business college and took shorthand and typing. Went to work with the Bridgeport Machine Company at their Oklahoma City store, and then after being office manager for a year there, I went to Seminole, Oklahoma, as assistant manager, but after a year there I decided I had to finish college. So I bought a round-trip bus ticket to the New York World's Fair in 1939 stopped off in Washington to get a job so I could go back to college, as a friend of mine had done, working for the government in the daytime and going to George Washington University at night. I succeeded, and in four years finished

my last two years of college. I worked at Federal Housing Administration from 1939 to January 1942 when I moved to the Department of State.

Q: What did you major in?

ADAMSON: I majored in economics in my undergraduate work. I graduated in June 1943, went into the Navy in the fall of '43, got out of the Navy in the spring of '46, and went back to work in the Department of State.

Department of State—Cultural Relations Division: Educational Exchange Film Distribution

Q: Let's go back to the Department of State for a moment. What did you do in the Department of State?

ADAMSON: I was in the Cultural Relations Division in the motion picture section, searching for, screening and distributing documentary films about the United States through Embassies, Legations and Consulates of the U.S. abroad, all in response to requests.

Q: I recall that you told me that you learned Spanish as a boy.

ADAMSON: I learned a little bit, because we ran the dairy in Sedgwick, and our customers included the Mexican employees of the Santa Fe Railroad. So I would learn to count and to say “good morning” and “how are you” and “how are the kids,” but mostly I learned it from the owner of the drugstore, whose father was German and his mother was Mexican, and he knew both languages. So that's how I really learned Spanish, working in the drugstore.

Q: Let's just talk for a minute about the Department of State program at that time. My recollection is that there were some fears of Nazi penetrations of Latin America and a desire on our part to counter that.

ADAMSON: The Cultural Relations Division in the Department of State played a very interesting role. We had the Office of War Information that was primarily concerned with Europe and the war effort there, and we had the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs under the leadership of Nelson Rockefeller, that was responsible for Latin America. The Cultural Relations Division was really everything, but it also was the policy coordinator for the other two. We did not, from a program point of view, get too much involved in the Latin America concerns over Nazi penetration. That was particularly in Argentina, and we were worried about Brazil at the time, too. The program was, of course, very small. It was set up, however, to carry out the agreement in the Buenos Aires 1936 treaty for the preservation of peace. I can't remember the exact title of the treaty. The United States Government could not sign all of that agreement, because we did not have a central federal education system. Most of the things agreed to, as far as the cultural and information exchange there, had to be carried out through the educational system. But we still were able to do a lot of the exchange of persons program and so on.

Q: In the motion picture program, as I recall, Disney was involved in that quite a lot, with a number of health films that were sort of...

ADAMSON: When we first started during the war, of course, it was strictly the embassy would ask for information on a certain subject, and we would then go out and try to find a film that already existed, and we would screen them and select them and send them out for somebody to look at. But Disney productions on health came a little bit later, not during the war itself. The only film during the war that Disney did was Saludos, Amigos, which was a little round-trip of vignettes all put together in one feature-length film covering Mexico, a little boy down in the Andes with his flute and his llama, a little airplane learning to fly over the Andes, then over to Rio with Jose Carioca, the parrot, and Donald Duck. It was very, very enjoyable, and it gave one a feeling for some of the things about Latin America. The health films were made for the war effort, but they came along when the

war effort was almost over. However, we started using them all over the world in the information program after World War II ended.

Q: Did you get an OIA visit Latin America at that time?

ADAMSON: I did not. At the university, I had specialized in Latin American history, Latin American geography, Latin American economics, and Latin American language. But I never did get to Latin America until after my year at the Army War College 1958-59. In 1961 I was assigned to Bogota. Before that I had not made a trip to Latin America, except for a TDY assignment in 1954 that took me to Guatemala and to produce a documentary on the role of communism under the rule of President Arbenz.

Q: Tell us briefly about your Navy experience during the war.

Navy Service: Utilizing Film and Educational Experience Gained At The Department of State

ADAMSON: Because I had been working in all kinds of educational films in the Cultural Relations Division at the Department, I was asked if I would apply for a commission to be a training aids officer in the U.S. Navy. They ended up recruiting a total of about 90 such officers from the educational system who had experience in educational films. So I worked 'until midnight cleaning up my desk at the Department of State and reported to the Bureau of Personnel at the Navy the next morning, knowing nothing about the Navy or ranks. All I knew was that I was an ensign, that that one stripe said I was an ensign, but I couldn't tell an admiral from a seaman first class.

Most guys got to be “90-day wonders.” They went into special training courses for a quick orientation, but I didn't have that opportunity, so I went from six weeks in the Bureau of Personnel to the Fifth Naval District in Norfolk. There, of course, I was working with ships, as well as shore-based training programs, primarily amphibious training. That was a great experience and a great learning opportunity for me because I went into a lot more than just

educational films. We went into pre-testing and post-testing and all kinds of educational methods to improve learning and decrease the amount of time it took.

Q: You returned to the Department of State in 1946. Same job, same place?

Return to DepState: Former Division Was by Then Known as IIIA — A Predecessor of USIA

ADAMSON: No. By that time, the Cultural Relations Division had been merged with the Office of War Information and the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs into something called the IIIA, the Interim International Information Administration in the Department. So when I came back I started to work in motion pictures, as the content officer, but almost immediately I became the administrative officer of the Motion Picture Division, because the administrative officer was picked to go on a special mission to Japan. So I became an administrative officer for the first time in my life.

Q: What was your next move after that?

ADAMSON: From there I went to Cairo as the films officer.

Q: You were in the Department of State. Of course, what was to become USIA was then under the Department of State.

ADAMSON: Right.

Q: When I first met you over in 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue.

ADAMSON: I was administrative officer of the Motion Picture Service, and you were on your way to China. Somebody in every one of the services had to talk with everybody going overseas and tell them what we were doing and what they could expect us to do for them, what kind of support we could give them. So that was when we first met. You're right.

Q: That's right. And I was going out, among other things, to be in charge of motion pictures for China.

ADAMSON: You were going to Shanghai?

Q: Shanghai. So you went to Cairo. What year was that?

ADAMSON: 1949. I got there just about the time Cairo abrogated the Suez Canal treaty with England, so the excitement really began at that point.

Assignment to Cairo

Q: Can you tell us something about your USIS program there and its objectives and what kind of experiences you went through?

ADAMSON: We had a fairly good sized program. We had an information officer, press officer, cultural affairs officer and assistant cultural affairs officer, librarian, plus myself, and a good sized local staff. We were in a building on the embassy grounds. Some of the remnants of the old Office of War Information operation in Egypt were hanging on. We had a fascinating printing shop. Jack Jonathan, who ran it for a long time in between OWI and USIA, had made a deal that if we would let him take in outside work and have people pay for it, he would then do all of the information program's printing free of charge. He wasn't on salary.

Q: Very interesting.

ADAMSON: He was paying his way by the outside work.

Q: Very different. Did they do printing for programs outside of Egypt?

ADAMSON: I don't remember. He was doing some of the regional book publications, because he was able to get some fantastic quality out of those old Gestetner machines. In

other words, he could do multi-color and get resolution that nobody ever thought possible. He also was able to do great photographic work, and I presume that was a part of his success.

Q: What do you recall were the principal objectives you had at that time?

ADAMSON: The principal objectives at that time were to try to reach more people with information about America. We didn't have the “class-versus-masses” argument yet. We were trying to reach as many Egyptians as we could about the United States, because all they knew then was that we had gotten involved in the war and we had defeated Rommel in North Africa, and that was about it. So we were trying to reach the student population, the government officials and general population. I ended up, of course, showing Disney's health films, which you mentioned before, to hundreds and thousands of villagers who had never heard of the United States, had never heard of health, had never heard of much of anything that they were being shown. When we were trying to evaluate the effectiveness of our film program, we got some very strange reports.

Q: I vaguely remember that some villagers who had never seen films before and saw the Disney animation, became somewhat frightened over enlarged mosquitoes that looked like monsters.

ADAMSON: Oh, absolutely. They just said, “Well, we don't have that problem. Our mosquitoes aren't that big here.” So they discounted the whole message. But also, in one Disney film, they were shown the burning of a very badly infected hut, and somebody said, “Where is that?” Another one said, “Don't you know? It's over in the Canal Zone. The British are burning it” (Laughter)

Of course, we had all kinds of reactions. One of the things that would happen, when we'd go out to a village and set up the screen and the projector, the audience would sit facing the projector. They had no idea about movies, and so we would have to stop and get them all reoriented and get them to watch the screen. But mostly they were fascinated about

that machine back there that could do this light and shadow effect, much more so than the message that was in the film.

But we did learn something that a colleague of mine always said, “You know, motion pictures is a projected medium.” We all thought, “Well, how stupid can you get not to know that?” But what he meant was that the audience cannot understand the message in the motion picture unless they can project themselves into it and recognize the symbols and everything that is going on. It was a learning period for all of us as to what people abroad could understand about the United States.

Q: When did you leave Cairo?

ADAMSON: I left Cairo with malaria in June, after almost three years, in June of '52. I was a reserve officer at that point in the Foreign Service. I came back to being a civil servant again in the Motion Picture Division in charge of the content and story staff.

Q: Did they require any language instruction?

ADAMSON: No, but I worked very hard at my Arabic and ended up for a year or more as the only American who spoke any Arabic.

Q: Oh, really? The only American where?

ADAMSON: In the staff of the embassy, as a result of which, of course, being one of the most junior officers, I was still invited by Ambassador Jefferson Caffery to almost everything he had over there, even though I sat way down below the salt. I was the only one who could communicate with some of the Arab guests, particularly villagers from the tribes who had been hospitable to him, and he wanted to invite them back. So I was there, plus the fact that French was quite commonly used, and I had some French.

Q: So at this point, you had Spanish, French, and some Arabic.

ADAMSON: Spanish, yes, but the Spanish-speaking colleagues and friends I made there were also trying to learn Arabic, so we rarely used Spanish. We tried our Arabic out on each other all the time.

Return to Washington (Motion Picture Division)

Q: Now you're back in the Agency.

ADAMSON: And traveling back and forth from Washington to New York to supervise script writers and film production.

Q: What year are we talking about now?

ADAMSON: We're talking about from 1952 until I left them in '55, I first worked for six months for Hunt Damon in the area office before I went to Turkey in February 1956. I had been asked to go to Brazil as motion picture officer and I had been asked to go to France as a motion picture officer. I said, “Thank you. I would like to stop being a motion picture officer and get into administration and broader concerns with programs.”

Q: What can you tell us about that period in the Agency when you were doing this traveling to New York?

USIA Comes Into Existence

ADAMSON: That was, of course, when on August 1, 1953, sitting at the same desk, all of a sudden I no longer worked for the Department of State. We became an independent Information Agency. I believe our director at that time was Ted Streibert.

Q: Who was in charge of the motion pictures?

ADAMSON: Herb Edwards.

Q: And that was the McCarthy period, too.

ADAMSON: Wait a minute. Herb Edwards. Herb was in motion pictures, but we had another director.

Q: Turner Shelton?

ADAMSON: Turner Shelton, yes, who later became Consul General in the Caribbean and ambassador in Guatemala or Honduras.

Q: Nicaragua.

ADAMSON: Nicaragua? Oh, great. Can we give him credit for what's going on now?

Q: He built, I was told by a friend of mine, or enlarged and had the largest residence in Latin America for an ambassador.

ADAMSON: Doesn't surprise me. Of course, his wife had a lot of money, which always helps.

Q: In any event, the McCarthy period, 1953, and the turnover. Did you run into any problems in content or criticism or anything like that?

ADAMSON: Not so much on the film side. The thing that was giving us the most trouble was publications, publications out of Germany, publications out of France. Mostly the people who got hooked on that were like Lee Brady. Lee Brady's staff had done a French translation of a very little book about how the United States had surpassed anything that socialism had ever hoped to accomplish for the people. The way the French translation came out was that we (i.e. U.S.) were more socialist than they. The feeling was—and this was what at least McCarthy tried to make out of it—we said we were more socialist than the socialists.

The other thing which went back into Germany—what was his name? He was called back from Germany as a witness. Reed Harris and he were the ones who were really taking the heat at that time.

Q: I can't remember.

ADAMSON: It was not a very happy period. The morale got as low as I think it's ever been.

Q: As I recall, in that period when you were in Washington motion pictures, there was a lot of pull and tug between the field and headquarters about motion pictures, the field wanting, evidently, more control, and Washington saying they...

ADAMSON: I don't think that's unusual for that period or any other period. There's always the feeling that we in the field know what we want. We know what is important for our audiences, and we feel Washington is very reluctant to provide it. The real problem is that you cannot make one film that satisfies that great variety of particular country and audience interests and needs. So the idea is to try to say, “All right, fine. You said you want something about this subject.” Then we have to try to figure out how to make a film about that subject that will be both interesting and knowledgeable and meaningful. You know, show them how a small-town newspaper editor operates to tell something about private enterprise in the U.S.

Q: There was a period of transition, it seems to me, during that time. In the field in publications and other media, I went through some of this myself, was given more leeway. For example, in 1954 we were making local films in Bangkok.

ADAMSON: We made films in Cairo, too.

Q: When you were there?

ADAMSON: When I was there, yes. About the AID program, or what now is AID, it was ICA at that time.

Q: But the films we made in Bangkok at that time came under Turner Shelton who visited us.

ADAMSON: I remember, yes.

Q: They were unattributed films on local subjects.

ADAMSON: Of course, it was the same with us. The big item there, the films we did in Cairo, for example, were again what was needed there. We needed to tell them what kind of assistance the United States was giving, the economic assistance, the health programs, naval medical research unit and what they're doing, in a semi-documentary format, but with a story line that would make it more interesting to the people.

Departure From Film Program to Deputy PAO

Q: You wanted to get out of motion pictures, you said, and you went to Turkey in 1956.

ADAMSON: Yes, as deputy PAO.

Q: To Ankara?

ADAMSON: To Ankara. My boss there was C. Edward Wells, who had come out of Iran, after a very fascinating experience. Turkey was, again, a very surprising thing to me. It wasn't until I got to Bogota that I began to see the differences among Egypt, Turkey, and Colombia. The Turks had the greatest confidence in themselves and knew what they were capable of doing, even though it was a little exaggerated, but they did somehow keep products, equipment, and so on running almost the way we used to when I was a kid on a farm in Kansas, with baling wire and chewing gum. It was amazing what they could do.

But the Egyptians had no confidence in themselves, no hopes for the future, and, at the time, they were probably about right, under the monarchy.

In Colombia, there was no confidence, but they had every reason in the world to be confident. They had a well-educated middle class. It was all very different. In Turkey people looked to be just like everybody else you'd known all your life. They were wearing Western dress. Ataturk had changed a lot of the old Near Eastern customs of dress, as well as language, and so you expected them to be just like the guy next door, but they weren't. They were still Turks!

USIA Program Objectives in Turkey: Promotion of US-Turkey Security Treaty—AID Program Support

Q: What were the program objectives there?

ADAMSON: Of course, we were very much involved in defense agreements with Turkey, both SEATO and NATO, and we had a fairly large military presence in both the Air Force in various bases, as well as the Izmir Headquarters of Half Sea of NATO. We wanted to underline the importance of friendly relations between Turkey and the United States and the need for the security treaty.

We had some very strong opposition and a lot of it was from American-educated intellectuals at the university. I don't know if we ever succeeded in doing any more than have them do a balancing act, to be undecided as to which way they wanted to swing, left or right.

Q: Did you have any operational problems? With such a large military establishment there, was there policy guidance?

ADAMSON: We had the responsibility for trying to keep the military out of being too evident, too overexposed. In the areas where the military had to be, we tried to get

community relations-type programs going, and to work closely with the press, so when there was a problem we could ferret out all the facts instead of having headlines that would really damage opinion of the United States. It was fairly successful, both in Izmir, as well as elsewhere and we had a fairly large economic program through AID.

Q: But did you travel around the Middle East very much?

ADAMSON: When I was in Egypt, I traveled to Gaza, Jerusalem, Amman, Damascus and Beirut. Not very long in any one of the places, but because I was sort of considered an unofficial regional motion picture officer, I stayed a week or so and consulted in each place. I didn't get to the eastern parts of Turkey along the sea, but I did get to the southern part and the Izmir area. Later I was transferred to Istanbul as public affairs officer.

The most fascinating experience in Turkey, since I was learning Turkish, was when I went along as chaperone-interpreter for two busloads of American school kids who went to visit Tarsus where St. Paul was born, and to some of the remains of the Greco Roman Empire. We went up to Cappadocia and spent the night in the limestone caves that had been carved out by the early Christians as they fled persecution, and saw the paintings on the walls of their chapel. That was fascinating. I enjoyed Turkey very much.

Some Adverse Results From the Educational Exchange Program

Q: Did you have any problems there that you can recall?

ADAMSON: The only problem was the one I mentioned earlier, that we were fairly close to a sizable group of young, thirtyish, up and coming Turks. I guess you'd call them yuppies. They were either coming up in business or in the academic world as professors or as leaders, who were very critical of the United States, and they'd been educated in the United States. I don't know. Maybe they knew us too well. On the other hand, I went back to Washington with the feeling that the experience people have in the United States kept them isolated from certain aspects of Americans in America that let them go home with

serious misconceptions and misunderstandings. It was during that period I tried my best to get the cultural exchange program to revise its method or add to it, which is one of the reasons, by the way, when I got to the East-West Center, I said, “Now we've got the answer to the exchange program. We're doing some of the things that should have been done for years.”

Q: I remember visiting Istanbul in 1961, and it sticks in my mind. When did you leave Turkey?

ADAMSON: I left Turkey in August of 1958, having been selected for the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Except for Cairo, every post I've had, I had intended to go back, but then I ended up getting a new assignment instead.

Assignment To Army War College: Benefits

Q: Do you want to tell us something about the Army War College? Was there one other USIA guy there?

ADAMSON: I was the only one from USIA. I was one of five civilians. There were two from the Department of State, two from CIA, and one from National Security Agency. All the rest were Army, with the exception of four Air Force, four Navy, and four Marines.

Q: I suppose they knew very little about USIA then.

ADAMSON: They knew very little about USIA, and mostly what they thought of international information was “dirty tricks.” I think the best way to describe the Army War College experience was to start off with Ambassador George Allen's comment to me: “Why in the world would we ever send anybody from the U.S. Information Agency to the Army War College?”

My answer to him was, “This is perfect for USIA and the Department of State. I don't know why they send the military there.” Because the year was spent in really studying the whole

world and the United States' relationships with that world, trying to identify the areas of good relationship, the areas of problem relationships, the areas that might really burst into flames and cause great difficulties.

Juxtaposed to that was study of the United States and its economy and the will of the people and what kind of a defense we could support, size and nature of the defense establishment, as well as other aspects of national defense and national security. How many treaties can we sign? How far can our commitments go? I thought that was one of the most useful years in my career because it enabled me to pull together most of the past experience that I had had and rethink it, and helped me to decide questions in the future on the basis of that experience, rather than just doing what had been done before that didn't get us into trouble.

Q: Did you have to write any particular paper or study?

ADAMSON: Everyone had to either go through the war games exercise or write a paper. I wrote a paper about the American presence abroad.

Q: What was the thrust of your paper?

ADAMSON: The thrust of it was to really look at what's happened in those areas where we have large concentrations of U.S. military personnel. I looked at France, Germany, England, and Japan. Part of it was classified, so the whole thing had to be classified, but, to summarize very quickly, I've got the feeling that it wasn't really so much a matter of what Americans did abroad, but how many were doing it. Because the real problems were economic. When you get a large American contingent in a community paying higher rents, paying higher salaries, paying higher prices for almost everything, it has a serious impact on that community.

Q: Them and us.

ADAMSON: Yes. Then on the troops' relationship with the community side, Germany did a very good job, of course, of trying to work with the press. The Command in Japan, on the other hand, wouldn't acknowledge they had a problem. So they were poles apart in their approach to community relations.

Q: You returned from the War College to what job?

ADAMSON: I returned from the War College back to Near Eastern Affairs as the program officer in the Office of the Assistant Director for Near East and South Asia. I went into the War College in '58, one year, back in '59. So I worked on the Near East South Asia again, where I had been since 1955.

Q: What were you doing there?

ADAMSON: The Program Officer was considered the advocate for the field programs. I was responsible for massaging field budget requests, field requests for materials with the media divisions, with the budget office and management. It was, in effect, a liaison job. Each regional bureau had the Assistant Director of USIA for that area and a deputy and then a program officer.

Q: My recollection was around 1955-56, the Near East area was leading in multimedia development of programs. Is that right?

ADAMSON: That I cannot comment on, because I don't know that we were leading in that. We were trying.

Q: Who was the area director around 1956?

ADAMSON: '56 was Hunt Damon. Anyway, that was a period in which Ted Streibert, in the '55, '56 era, was pushing everyone to write down their six-month and 12-month objectives, and then, come hell or high water, you'd better have accomplished some of

those objectives when he came back for a progress report six months later. It was a new approach. Ted knew very little about the Agency and international affairs and all that, but, from a management point of view, he did try to pin us down as to what we were trying to accomplish and to evaluate whether or not that was being done. So I have to give him a lot of credit for that contribution he made. However, I left in February of '56 for Turkey, so I lost the rest of that period that you were asking about, until I got back.

Return to Discussion of Events During Tour in Turkey

Q: Do you want to tell us about Turkey?

ADAMSON: Well, we discussed Turkey briefly. As I mentioned, we had C. Edward Wells. We finally learned one interesting thing that most people don't know: the “C.” stands for Charlemagne Edward Wells. Before he came in government, when he was still an Oriental arts dealer, he planned a trip to China back in the Thirties, early Forties, but nonetheless, in a telegram his name, Charlemagne, got translated as Great King of Europe, and he really got the red-carpet treatment on his arrival in China.

Ed had come out of Tehran, where he had had a very interesting experience during Mossadegh's ups and downs. He'd been there prior to that, involved with the military aid pipeline into the Soviet Union during the war.

Nonetheless, in Turkey, we had a very difficult tightrope to walk with the Greeks and Turks being at odds over Cyprus. I got to Turkey shortly after they had had a very serious riot in Istanbul and where they had done a great deal of damage at Taksim Square. Later I was transferred to Istanbul and lived on the edge of that stick of dynamite for a year.

In Turkey, our problem was really to—and I think I got into this the last time we talked—our problem was to try to keep Turkey aware of U.S. policy, understanding America better, especially our commitment to our treaty obligations, because they were not quite sure whether to trust us or whether to turn to the Soviet Union for the kind of support they

wanted, more for economic development than they did from a military point of view. They thought they could handle themselves militarily with most anyone. They, of course, did have the background of the Turkish involvement in Korea, and they were very proud of that. They had done well and had a good reputation, so we, of course, referred to that in a great deal of material we were doing, regarding military presence and the relationship between the Turkish military and U.S. military.

Q: I want to ask you a double-edged question. One, you had come out of the Army War College, and, therefore, perhaps had some actual military contacts in Turkey from your old classmates. Another thing, what were your professional relations with the military? In other words, how did the military assist you in doing your job?

ADAMSON: Of course, I went to the War College after I'd been in Turkey, but I can respond to the question regarding relationships with the Turkish military. They were good. They were much better than our relations with university faculty, and it was because, as I said earlier, we had the Korean experience in common, where we had fought together, where we had been allies. We were regularly going to the Turkish military academies and presenting materials for their library on U.S. military history and other kinds of textbooks that they wanted for reference, so we did have very good relationships there.

Q: I didn't make my question clear. I really am thinking in country after country, where the U.S. military presence was very big at that time, and we, USIS, were rather small, we had to work with our own military for common objectives. That must have been different from country to country.

ADAMSON: It was different in Turkey, and it was primarily because our major military presence was, of course, NATO and its Half-Sea Command, as a result of which relations with that Command were primarily in Italy for that portion of the NATO Command.

We did have a branch post in Izmir, where the Half-Sea Command is located. It was our one USIS operation with very few local employees plus the consulate general. By the way,

G. Lewis Schmidt was our consul general there during one period, and when you get back, you can ask him. He can answer that question much better than I can. But we did maintain good relations with both the provincial officials and the military, the U.S. and our allies in that area. We did not have as much to do in either Ankara or Istanbul.

Q: Let's move over to Istanbul. You say you lived for a year on the stick of dynamite. Did you have any personal unpleasant experiences there?

ADAMSON: I would guess the most unpleasant experience I had—it was embarrassing, not necessarily unpleasant—was when one member of the U.S. Congress who came to Turkey and we had a press conference for him. The first question, of course, that the Turks wanted to ask was, “What are they saying in the halls of Congress about the Cyprus issue?”

And his answer was, “They never discuss the Cyprus issue in the U.S. Congress.” Of course, he was on the Foreign Relations Committee, and that kind of struck the Turkish press as rather unusual. So they marked him, and because we were not in a position to argue with the gentleman, since he had controlled our purse strings, we had to let that one go. I was rather embarrassed.

Nonetheless, we did have to have a hands-off position on Cyprus. In other words, that was an issue for the Greeks and the Turks, and all we could say is, “We want you to settle it peacefully.” So that was the kind of spot that we were in.

Greek-Turk relations during the period I was in Istanbul? The Greek patriarch was right down the block from my office and that was usually the focus of protests and demonstrations. But during the period that I was there, they were still recovering from the excesses of that earlier demonstration when people were killed and property destroyed. So I was fortunate. I inherited the calm after the storm.

Q: When did you leave Istanbul?

Return to Discussion of Army War College Assignment: Benefits

ADAMSON: I left Istanbul in August 1958, headed for the Army War College.

Q: I see. How did you happen to go to the War College?

ADAMSON: To this day, I don't know who it was, but something happened. There was a vacancy up there, and immediately they said, “Oh, Keith Adamson would be a good man to go for that.” I don't know who said it, but I went. It was afterwards, of course, that George Allen asked the question I mentioned the other day: “Why would we send anybody to the Army War College?”

I said, “Why would the military send anybody? It's perfect for civilians in the Foreign Service.”

Q: You found it helpful in your career, your attendance there?

ADAMSON: Yes, for two reasons. One, it gave me an opportunity to sort of evaluate all the experience that I'd had to date, to do a lot of reading and studying, and it was most useful, the sort of interchange I had with the other civilians, the Department of State, the Foreign Service, the Central Intelligence Agency and National Defense Agency. And it was especially valuable afterwards, when I got to Saigon, because there were classmates all over the place. If you will recall, in Saigon, we had about 117 military officers assigned to the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office, JUSPAO, in addition to the 120-some Foreign Service officers. We'd find that we needed additional personnel for some purpose. All I had to do was go over to my classmate from the Army War College, who was in charge of personnel, General McGovern, and say, “We need three more officers.” Well, he would start the paperwork going back to Washington, but in the meantime, he would assign the officers. Things worked much better that way.

Q: After the War College, your next assignment was what?

Program Officer—Office of Assistant Director, USIA, For Near East and South Asia

ADAMSON: After the War College, I had those two years as program officer for Near East South Asia.

Q: We covered that, didn't we?

ADAMSON: We started to talk about what is a program officer?

Q: Oh, yes. Right, right.

ADAMSON: I didn't do a very good job of explaining it, but each one of the areas had a program officer, so we, of course, formed our little club, despite the fact that we were fighting each other tooth and nail for whatever resources were available. We tried to get them for programs in our countries.

Q: What about within the area itself? The different countries equally called for goods.

ADAMSON: Oh, yes, definitely. That's, of course, where it comes down to the area director and perhaps even a higher authority to make decisions as to which countries had the priority and which ones had the proposals that merited the support.

One of the things, by the way, that I did that was copied by everyone else while I was there, I did a study of fixed costs of program and Admin in each country in the area. Fixed costs which had to be paid if we were going to continue, before you could ever have discretionary money for new program use.

Q: Right.

ADAMSON: As a result of that, I think we persuaded everyone, including the foreign buildings office in the Department of State, to buy or build housing in Pakistan. The prices were escalating so rapidly that we figured that pretty soon they were going to run out of

program money just to pay rent. So we pushed government housing as a hedge against inflation. I think it has still worked out very well.

Q: That's one of the very few times I've ever heard of using money for housing.

ADAMSON: That's a part of our fixed costs, you see.

Q: Of course.

ADAMSON: We talked FBO into including money in its budget to build the housing, so that the corps staff of U.S. Government agencies there were able to keep their housing rates down.

Q: But you're right. The whole study and identification of fixed costs became one of the bedrock things all over the world since then.

ADAMSON: I remember Ben Posner or someone said, “Everybody's got to do this.”

Q: Yes, of course.

ADAMSON: I was working with Nancy Stephens, I remember. She was very good on the budget side. So we put together a report that indicated that it was something that had to be watched very carefully or it could get out of hand. Fixed costs also included, say, a commitment to a periodical that had to be published if you were going to maintain your reputation. So you couldn't have a one-time exhibit if you used the money for all these other things.

Q: Keith, your thinking was obviously like McNamara's and his whole approach to the budgetary process. What did they call that, when it finally got wrapped into

ADAMSON: It was called a great many things before it got spread throughout the government from the Department of Defense, but it was called

Q: In the Agency, it had a name, and we spent endless hours.

ADAMSON: I know. Voice of America was the guinea pig while I was there, and what did we call it?

Q: It'll come to us.

ADAMSON: Besides those other names. It was “Zero-Based Budgeting.”

Q: You just finished talking about being program officer. Where did you go from there?

Bogota, Colombia—As PAO

ADAMSON: PAO Bogota, Colombia, at last. Latin America was my academic area of specialization.

Q: Tell us about that assignment.

ADAMSON: Just before I went, I had my orders. Ed Murrow became Director of the Agency, and he called me in and asked if I would like to be his—what did they call them in those days—special assistant—his “gofer.” And I was very tempted because of my admiration for Ed, but I finally got up the nerve to say, “I've been trying to get to Latin America for a great many years, and this was my first opportunity.”

Q: What year was that again?

ADAMSON: 1961. I said I had a feeling that he would be able to find a good number of people who know their way through the bureaucratic jungle to help avoid the pitfalls and traps, but who aren't interested in going overseas, and who do not know the language already and have to go through training to get there.

So he said, “Fine,” and I went. It was my first country PAO assignment, and my ambassador, Fulton Freeman, who had been political officer in Rome, political officer in Belgium, and charge for a period, was at his first post as ambassador. We were doing a good job of learning together. Of course, he had learned some Italian while he was in Italy; he'd learned French from a lot of different places along the line, and his academic area was China, and he spoke Chinese. But he worked very hard on his Spanish, and before very long he was delivering speeches in Spanish. As we would ride along home, I would say, “Everything was perfect excep“ and I would point out some of the things that he had made mistakes in. He never made them again. That was a very pleasant tour, where you can have that kind of communication with your chief.

Q: I understand that people who live in Bogota feel that they speak better Spanish than anywhere else in Latin America, and also that it's sort of the cultural heartland of Latin America. Is that so?

ADAMSON: It may have been. People don't think of Bogota and Colombia, in general, in those terms these days, with all the news about drug tycoons and the murders of those who try to make the wheels of justice run. All over Latin America, they would say, “Where did you learn your good Spanish?”

I'd say, “I learned it here and there and so on. I lived in Bogota for two years.”

“Oh, yes. You lived in Bogota. That's where you get the best Spanish.” So it's not just the Colombians who say that. It's the reputation that they have all over.Nonetheless, it's a high altitude place (9,000 feet), and a lot of people prefer not to live at that high an altitude. For the first year, I was just exhilarated by it, then after a while, I got to the point where I would be delighted to take a Sunday off and drive down the mountain to get to a tropical climate for a few hours.

Socio-Political Situation in Colombia: Early 1960”s

Colombia was a fascinating place. I think I mentioned earlier that when I got to Colombia, Stan Swinton, who was at that time Vice President of AP for international operations, came in, in preparation for John F. Kennedy's visit. He and I had been in Cairo together. He was asking me about what I thought of the Colombians and all this, and I was comparing my experience in Cairo, my experience in Turkey, with my experience there. I said, “You know, in Cairo, in the monarchy days, most people had no hope for the future, and they were probably right until the revolution and the monarchy ended. In Turkey, they had all the confidence in the world, and it was exaggerated. They didn't deserve to be quite that confident in their ability to solve all their problems, but it was fascinating. Whereas in Colombia, I found that they didn't have any confidence, and they had all the reason in the world to have confidence. They had resources, they had a well-educated middle class. The only problem was they had a fairly large oligarchy that had somewhat the same role and power that the monarchy had, and so they felt restricted, they felt constrained. They didn't think they would have that chance to use whatever talents they had.”

Q: Was there an insurrection going on at the time?

ADAMSON: By the time I got there, they had already agreed on “alternation” where the two major political parties would take turns with the presidency. Alberto Lleras Camargo was president then. He was a wonderful man, a professor. They had an election while I was there, and Luis Guillermo Valencia from Popayan was elected. He had a reputation as a great extemporaneous speaker and poet. No, his father was the poet. But he was also the brunt of a lot of jokes, particularly amongst the press. I can't put any of the kind that they told on tape. I'll tell you later.

However, there was a great deal of violence in the countryside. The Army and the police were constantly battling with the guerrillas. One of the main reasons was the guerrillas were preying upon plantation owners and farmers and villages to support themselves. They had to have money and they had to have food. So that was mostly why they were

running into these gun battles with the forces of law and order. It was a way of life. It was no longer political.

Q: Wasn't there a president of Colombia who made quite a reputation for building democracy in that country?

ADAMSON: Of course, the great hero—oh, man, this is a horrible thing this morning; my memory has faded on me.

Q: Never mind. It will come back. This was the beginning, with President Kennedy, of the campaign for—what was it called?

ADAMSON: Alianza para el Progreso.

Q: The Alliance for Progress. Right. And I suppose the program was putting a lot of emphasis on that.

ADAMSON: Definitely, because that was the President's principal thrust in Latin America. The Agency for International Development practically changed its name to Alliance for Progress. Everything else that was going on, the CARE programs were doing their best to contribute to some of the same kinds of projects. The Peace Corps volunteers who arrived while I was there, were trying to do the same kind of thing as the Alliance for Progress; they were trying to carry out the spirit of working together. It got a good reception in Latin America.

Q: How did you find the Peace Corps people?

ADAMSON: Almost 99.9% pure. They were likable, hard working, dedicated young people. I was really impressed by them. One of the joys was, when you had a visitor, to be able to jump in the car and go out to one of the villages where they were working, and they were

delighted to show off what the people of the community had done in building a new school or a new water supply or something of that sort. It was really great.

Q: You were in Bogota for two years.

ADAMSON: Two years, with every intention of going back. One of the things I had gotten the ambassador, the head of the political section, the head of the economic section, the head of AID, to agree to was that they would work with me on a card file, by name, of all of the leaders in the government and business and professions and the media, and that we would record what they thought about certain issues that affected the United States-Colombia relations.

Q: That is another very, very important development that could have been used all over the world.

ADAMSON: Not that we would stop doing our general efforts to increase understanding of the United States and its policies and its culture and so on, but that we would be much more targeted with respect to the leaders and the opinion makers. And they all agreed, and we were going to keep on those cards very brief reports of conversations on any one of those issues, and whether or not they were able to provide them information that would change their mind if they happened to be negative.

Home Leave: Travel & Lecturing in U.S. and American People's Reactions to Foreign Affairs Programs

That was pending when I got back on home leave. I was one of the first to enjoy the Airstream trailer. I got a car and a trailer and took the family, and we traveled.

Q: Oh, you did that?

ADAMSON: About 3,000 miles or so in two weeks, saw Niagara Falls for the first time in my life.

Q: This was a program, as I recall, of lending officers on home leave an R&R vehicle so they could get to see more of the country, the real America.

ADAMSON: Re-Americanization was the key word.

Q: Right. And I believe the Congress eventually killed that program.

ADAMSON: I don't know, but mostly it was not costing the government anything, because — what's his name from Lima, Ohio?

Q: The man who's most known for manufacturing the Airstream. [Editor's Note: Name was Wally Byam.]

ADAMSON: I can't remember now, but I visited the factory while I was on this trip in his trailer. But nonetheless, we were also expected to meet with people who were interested in international affairs in our area of the world, and give talks about the Foreign Service.

Q: Where did you go on your trip? And what year did you go in?

ADAMSON: It was in 1963, in the summer of '63. I went up to the Army War College, of course, and headed north. Then I went on up to Cornell University in New York, saw the finger lakes for the first time, up to Rochester and saw Eastman-Kodak and found out how they make all that stuff, and I saw Niagara Falls for the first time. I'd been in Canada, in Newfoundland during earlier days when you had to stop with an airplane. You couldn't fly that far. Then we went down to Akron, Ohio. My kids got there just in time for the soapbox derby. I saw old friends from Goodyear that I'd had duty with in Egypt and Bogota who got the boys tickets to the races. Of course, we went through the automobile city and the Ford museum at Dearborn, and then to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and saw some

of the faculty there. On into Chicago, saw friends, and then to the University of Illinois at Urbana. I gave talks there. Stopped off in Highland County—no, it wasn't Highland County. It was the county in Ohio where my grandfather was born and from where he served in the Ohio Cavalry in the Civil War.

Q: You were telling us about a trip you made in a recreation van while on home leave in 1963.

ADAMSON: That's right. We had left the University of Illinois at Urbana, where I talked with some of the Fulbright professors who had been in Colombia from there, and met with a number of other faculty who were interested in Latin America affairs. Then I got the chance to go back where my grandfather was born and raised, and couldn't find anything, but I did spend a relaxing time looking at tombstones in graveyards, where he was from.

Q: What state was that?

ADAMSON: Ohio. Southern Ohio. Then on to the factory that made the trailers that we were traveling in, and back to Washington, DC, just in time to start the counterinsurgency course at the Foreign Service Institute.

Q: Before we get into that, can you make any comments on the general attitudes of the American people that you came in contact with?

ADAMSON: That is a good point. I don't recall anything but brief but intense interest and very friendly attitude. I find that most people, including family, are anxious to hear about your experiences and where you've been and the country you've been in, but their interest span is rather short, unless they are an academic type or somebody who is involved in the issues and in the area all the time.

Q: Did you find, more often than not, that people did not understand foreign aid or were opposed to it?

ADAMSON: If you talk to farmers, they were not opposed to it. They were interested in it, because they had agricultural surpluses they wanted to move out. Other people were very concerned about foreign aid, but I would say it was a 50-50 thing. There were those who thought of it in humanitarian terms, but those who looked at our needs at home couldn't quite understand why we would spend all that money to help meet the needs abroad. There was no solid phalanx of opinion in either direction, but you ran into all kinds of opinions about it.

Counter Insurgency Training

Q: The counterinsurgency, that was a very interesting and important development. Can you comment on that, how it started, what it was, what you thought of it?

ADAMSON: It was an interesting series of lectures and discussions running all the way from Mao Zedong's writings, about the guerrillas and the indirect support for revolution, (the fish that swim in the sea of the population of public opinion), as well as examining some of the very specific insurgencies that were taking place, namely where I was, in Bogota, in Colombia, and in the Middle East and in Vietnam and so on. I must say that I felt it lasted longer than it should have. In other words, here I was on leave, anxious to get back to my post, and I felt they could have done it in half the time, at least, and covered all the same materials.

Q: And it was a requirement.

ADAMSON: It was a requirement.

Q: That was Bobby Kennedy's brainchild.

ADAMSON: That's right. That was Bobby Kennedy's brainchild. Of course, we'd already gotten into the whole subject of limited warfare at the War College, and it was touched on in this one. But again, I say, I'm glad I took it, but I felt I had already been through a great

deal of what was being presented, and it could have been done in a shorter period of time. Military Reaction to Counter-Insurgency in Early 1960”s

Q: Keith, to go back to the War College for a minute, I was in the National War College in 1960-61, and I found that the military did not have much understanding of insurgencies, and they tended to want to deal with them in normal ways.

ADAMSON: That was the impression I got from my classmates at the Army War College. They didn't talk about insurgency as being anything strange; they felt it was somebody who wanted to fight, and they were going to fight it the way they thought the fight ought to be conducted. Some members of the class wanted a few more megatons of nuclear weapons, and others wanted a few more tanks, and so on. They all had their own solutions to it. In the psychological warfare side, in PSYOPS, most of the proposals that came out were dirty tricks. It was fascinating. But they did appreciate knowing about the kind of operations we had on an ongoing basis in foreign countries and what we were trying to accomplish. So I think they came out of it with a better understanding of what the U.S. Government is doing through the U.S. Information Agency.

Diverted From Return to Bogota—Sent to VOA

Q: You did not return to Bogota, is that right?

ADAMSON: That is right. I got a telephone call. Well, I was having lunch with Hugh Ryan, who was the area director at the time, over at—what's that place in Georgetown—Sans Souci. I was having lunch with him, and over at the next table were Henry Loomis and Ed Murrow. So we finished up before they did, and they invited us to stop at their table. At that point, Ed Murrow said, “Keith, I want you to not go back to Bogota. I want you to go over to the Voice of America and be Henry's deputy.”

Q: Did you know Henry at that time?

ADAMSON: I'd met him, yes. Working as program officer in the area, I dealt with all the media programs.

Q: But you didn't particularly know him well?

ADAMSON: I didn't know him well.

Q: This came as quite a surprise, then?

ADAMSON: Oh, yes, absolutely. Out of the blue.

Q: Quite a compliment, too, since Murrow, with his background, and Loomis with his.

ADAMSON: I had known Ed Murrow. I don't know who it was—one person I know who had recommended me highly to Ed Murrow was Tom Sorensen. Tom and I had worked very closely together for a long time, and Ed Murrow was listening to the Sorensen brothers in those days. Well, the President was listening to one, and Ed was listening to the other one.

Q: Right.

ADAMSON: But it was interesting, because then the argument started going back and forth between Henry Loomis and Hugh Ryan as to where I should go, while Ed and I listened. But nonetheless, I explained this project I had mentioned a moment ago, about trying to target our information and persuasion to very specific leaders, and that I wanted to get back and keep that going. Ed finally made the decision. He said, “Well, Keith, one thing is you can always believe that that was going to be the most successful project that you ever had in your life while you are there at the Voice of America, helping Henry.” And that ended it.

So then I started my arguments with Lionel Mosley, who was head of personnel. I said, “Mose, I've got to get back to Bogota.”

And he said, “No, no, you've got your new orders already cut to go to Voice of America.”

I said, “I've got to go back to Bogota.” The reason was my family had traveled already back to Bogota, because I'd gone to the counterinsurgency course, and the boys had to get back to go to school. I knew the regulations, that I would have to pay for all of that travel out of my own pocket if I didn't have orders back to Bogota.

So Mose called me one day and said, “Keith, you've got to go back to Bogota.”

I said, “That's what I've been trying to tell you.” So I went back. I was there about three weeks and settled up my affairs, and then headed back in October.

Q: Just in observation, it seems to me that in those days, personnel was not very geared to the needs of families like today, I understand.

ADAMSON: That's a big change. They were just beginning to permit wives to go to language class, and they were beginning to invite wives to orientation for duty in a country, as beginners, but nothing like what they're doing today.

Q: In 1963, you went to VOA.

ADAMSON: October of '63.

Q: As deputy director.

ADAMSON: Right.

Crisis and Continuin Problems at VOA: Kennedy Assassination Linguistic Group Matters

Q: That's very interesting. Can you tell us about that?

ADAMSON: Henry Loomis introduced me to the staff at the staff meeting, and took off on one of his favorite vacations, a safari in Africa. He hadn't been gone but about a week, and I was acting director, when John F. Kennedy was shot in Dallas, November 22nd.

Bernie Anderson and I were having lunch over at the Officers Club at Fort Lesley J. McNair, and just as they served my basket of shrimp and his lunch, whatever it was, the announcement came over the loudspeaker that Kennedy had been shot. Bernie's wife and children walked in, and we said, “Here, have some lunch,” and he and I got up without lunch and got in his Volkswagen bug, and he dropped me at the Voice and headed back to 1776. Of course, there was a sense of confusion at the Voice because people were so shocked.

But one of the problems that came up was: “How are we going to sort out the facts from the rumors?” Because we were getting all sorts of reports from all kinds of sources. So the good old “minimum two source” rule at the Voice went into effect, and also, if we had a rumor we delayed bringing it out until we could check it out.

The other thing that was associated with that is there was so much happening so fast that the language services couldn't get their translations done quickly so that they could keep up with the fast-breaking news on the broadcasts, where the language versions had already been prepared for broadcast for the most part.

Q: And wasn't there a limited telegraphic rule at the time?

ADAMSON: That's right.

Q: You couldn't get much from the field.

ADAMSON: That affected us, particularly later, of course, during the Dominican crisis. But at this particular moment, our problem was how could we keep up with it, because it was moving so quickly and it was changing so quickly. First, there was hope, then there

was no hope. They came in and said to me that they wanted to drop the languages and let worldwide English handle it on all threads. I said, “No way.” I said, “How would you like to be sitting in Leningrad, listening to a nice Russian-language broadcast, and all of a sudden, it's English, you don't understand a word they're saying?” I said, “It's better that you continue what you have already planned and break in with news bulletins.” So that was the way we handled the thing until we began to get the full story and the word that he had died and Johnson had been sworn in as president. But I'll never forget; that was a very trying time.

Q: Did Ed Murrow call you in to give you any suggestions or anything like that?

ADAMSON: No. At that moment, you see, we were moving very fast. Then, of course, Bernie Anderson called and we got together on policy, the normal kind of routine policy meetings after that. But there in the first few hours, there was no time to get a bunch of people together for policy. We were dealing with a news break.

Q: Did you have a VOA correspondent at Dallas at the time?

ADAMSON: Yes. Who was it traveling with the President? We had someone traveling with the President, but I can't remember now who it was. That was a big help.

Q: You had someone at the White House?

ADAMSON: That's right. Usually, the person at the White House was the one who traveled. But getting through on the telephone, of course, was also a problem at that time, if I remember correctly. However, it worked out.

Q: So there you are in your initial days at VOA, heading it up with what was one of the major catastrophes of that period. Other than that, what kind of problems did you face?

ADAMSON: After that baptism, it was a very interesting tour of duty. One of Henry Loomis' management devices—call it that—was to have a regular staff meeting in which issues

were discussed and brought up, and new reports, new developments were announced. He had tape recorded all of them, and those tapes were then sent to all of the correspondents bureaus and the transmitter stations so that everybody could keep up with what was going on. Also they were played back over an in-house loudspeaker system so that anybody who couldn't attend the meeting—there were hundreds that couldn't—could listen to it. Everybody could keep up. It made a large organization feel like a small one, like a family. I thought it was a very good device. But one of the first things I had to do was say, “Look, I will be able to participate a lot more easily if you will tell me what these acronyms stand for,” because everybody was throwing around acronyms.

Q: By the way, did Henry Loomis call you from Africa during these early days?

ADAMSON: He got in touch and wanted to make sure how things were going. Yes, he did. But of course, he was off in the boonies, no telephone. The story he told, when he got back from that trip, though, was he found out about it because he would run into people up there who were listening on their little radios to Radio Moscow and BBC and Voice of America. His comment was that they didn't really believe any of us, but they listened to all of us. He said they were very, very cautious as to whose facts they would accept. But he said that's how he found out about it, out there on his safari.

Q: Did you have problems with the varied personnel of VOA, I mean, all these different language emigres, etc?

ADAMSON: Two kinds of problems pop into my mind. One was that in some of the language services, the average age was over 70, and we had quite a few health problems and quite a few heart attacks on the job. That always came as a shock, and even though we should have been prepared, we never were.

The other kind of thing that would happen is I remember involved the Cambodian service. When things really went awry in Cambodia, we were concerned because we had no one but the nationals, non-U.S. citizens who had been hired because of their Cambodian

language ability. We had no one who could tell what they were doing in the broadcasts. At that time, there were threats that the families in Cambodia would be treated badly if “VOA” behaved badly, and so if we announced something that was unpleasant to Cambodian authorities, the staff might change it. It was most exciting when the Department of State put its computer to work to find anybody who knew Cambodian. Well, we finally found somebody who had just arrived in Cali, Colombia. Cambodian is not a very important language in Colombia. So we got him back to VOA for temporary duty, and I think it was supposed to be two weeks. It turned out to be two months. In the meantime, we got Dick Constantino, a slightly overweight individual who had Cambodian, Lao, and Thai languages in his background. I had duty with him later in Laos. We finally had somebody so we could continue the Cambodian language broadcasts without being worried about them.

Q: I can't remember the man's name. He was a Thai, a local employee, who was in charge of the VOA, I believe, the Thai language service, but he was the leading tiger hunter in Thailand, and as a result, knew some of the royalty in Cambodia and was being used as a conduit. That must have been before '63.

ADAMSON: I don't remember that. It didn't come up while I was there. In our country programs at the post, we quite frequently had people who were members of the royal family or whose family were “chamberlains” or somebody close to the royal family. As a result, we had pretty good contacts.

Q: What were your other big stories at VOA?

ADAMSON: At VOA we were constantly in the process of upgrading the transmitters and the physical facilities, and it was a major task getting the facts before the Congress and getting the funds. At the time, I recall we had about a $30 million operating budget and about a $75 million capital budget for new facilities. The two that were going on at the time I was there were negotiations for the megawatt medium-wave transmitter in Thailand and

for the new short-wave transmitter location in the Philippines. It was in Tarlac Province, so we could get the larger, more modern, more powerful transmitters set up there, in return for which we would give the old 50 kWs and the other transmitters to the Philippine Government. I did not go abroad on those negotiations, but was very much involved in all the communications regarding them. Let's see. What else?

Q: The Dominican Republic?

ADAMSON: I started to mention that.

Q: What year was that?

ADAMSON: That was in '65. Henry had gone to the Department of Education, and I was acting director until John Chancellor from “Good Morning, America” came.

Q: How long a period was that?

ADAMSON: It was eight or nine months. I can't remember exactly when Henry left, but it was early March, I think, and Chancellor arrived in October, I think.

Q: So the Dominican problem came up during the time you were acting director.

ADAMSON: The Agency was involved with the military in trying to get mobile radio transmitters into the Dominican Republic in order to keep on the air with news, and they were having great difficulty. The local radio stations had all been blown and weren't functioning, and there was considerable panic and chaos because people couldn't find out what was going on.

So one of the things I did was to call a few radio stations in Puerto Rico to ask them if they had listeners in the Dominican Republic, if their signal reached that far, and said that we were concerned that the people in the Dominican Republic weren't receiving the news. I asked if they would be interested in picking up our news broadcasts and relaying

them, so the Dominican would know what was going on. While I was talking to the guy, asking if they'd be interested in doing this, I realized I was on the air. (Laughter) They did broadcast. It was not a written agreement that they would do it on a regular basis, so I had no assurance that they were doing it as often as we would like. But nonetheless, two stations agreed to carry the VOA news broadcasts in Spanish to the Dominican Republic. VOA also loaned some engineers to go down to the Dominican Republic to help in the rebuilding of their broadcasting station.

Q: I believe the Agency was very much involved in trying to help get out the vote in the Dominican Republic in those days.

ADAMSON: I don't know the details of that. All I know is that Hew Ryan was down there as well as Vallimarescu. They all went in as sort of temporary PAOs. I'm not sure I would have liked that duty.

Q: No, I wouldn't think so. When Chancellor took over, did you stay on for a while?

ADAMSON: Yes, I stayed on from when he came in '65 to January of '67, when I went to Saigon. I was his deputy then for a little over a year.

Q: Here's a man coming in from the outside completely. What kind of a relationship did you have with him?

ADAMSON: It was at arm's length for the first few months, and he brought in somebody from New York, whom I later saw when I was in Laos, a newsman. But nonetheless, he told me later, he said, “I don't understand why they appointed me. You're the professionals. You know how to operate this place.”

I said, “Yes, but wait until you get into the politics of it. You were appointed by Lyndon Johnson, and that gives you some authority and influence that I do not have, and you can help the Voice in many ways that I can't. So don't worry about the day-to-day operations;

let your deputy take care of that problem. You worry about overall style, what you want to do, what you want to communicate, the policy, and getting us the money to do it and the authority to do it."

The thing I think I appreciated as much as anything else was that maybe a year later, one day he said, "Keith, over these months that I worked with you, I've finally gotten to the place that I can predict what your decision is going to be before you make it." And I got to thinking, you know, is that good or bad? But the point is, at least I was consistent. I had some standards that guided my decisions, and I thought that's better than not being consistent or predictable. So I took it as a compliment.

Q: I had the feeling that Chancellor seemed to be somewhat uncomfortable in that job. He really wanted to get out.

ADAMSON: He took the job reluctantly. He said something to the effect, "Lyndon Johnson is a great arm-twister." He said, "After his lecture and all of that, I would have felt guilty or un-American or something if I hadn't taken the job." But he was not happy with the assignment. But he worked hard at it. I must give him credit.

One of the things that he really brought in was the whole idea of most people are not going to be there listening to the radio eight to ten hours a day, and when they tune in, they want to get an update on the news, maybe a feature or two, and then that's that. And when they come back to you five hours later, they want an update. So what he was trying to do was have a news summary that brought the headlines up to date on a continuing basis. I wasn't around long enough to see what the audience response was to that, but we had a good audience. There was no doubt about it.

Vietnam: Joint US Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO)

Q: During all this period, the war was developing in Vietnam, about a year. So in 1967, January, you went over there, right?

ADAMSON: Right.

Q: How did that come about?

ADAMSON: It was partly as a result of the fact that I had worked closely with Barry Zorthian, who was, in effect, the assistant director for programs, or something like that, at the Voice of America, when I was program officer for Near East South Asia. We'd gotten to know each other very well. Barry had gotten very good reports on my performance at the Voice after he went to Vietnam, and he asked for me.

Q: Good.

ADAMSON: I don't know if he regrets that or not, but we're still pretty good friends. (Laughter) When I was in Washington just a year ago for the 45th anniversary of the Voice, Barry and I got together and had a long chat. Barry had been loaned to the Department of State to be the Director of the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office in Saigon, and I went over as his deputy. I found out later that that meant I was the Public Affairs Officer for Vietnam; Barry wasn't. But I had two roles. I was the Public Affairs Officer, which means that I should have (if I had known it, I would have) felt more responsibility for what I call the “normal” U.S. Information Agency activities in Vietnam. I would have worried a little bit more about the library, about the book translation program, and some of the other cultural exchange programs. But instead, I got so involved in trying to build 12 radio stations and five T.V. stations, and operating the airborne transmitters until they could get built, and worrying about the provincial representatives of JUSPAO and flying out every weekend with Barry to see how the guys were doing and to keep their morale up and all that. I really got carried away with all this fighting the war and the insurgency and the psychological operations, which JUSPAO was involved in, and sort of neglected the normal programs.

Q: Did Barry sort of give you, hourly or otherwise, "This is going to be your division of responsibilities that I want you to take care of all these things?"

ADAMSON: Barry had his own way of operating, but basically, I was the day-to-day manager, and he would worry about external relations. Of course, he also had press relations under him. I was operating the information, cultural programs, and John McGowan was operating the press bureau. So I didn't get involved over there.

Q: As I remember, Barry went there in '66 or so?

ADAMSON: Barry went there in '64 and left there after I did. He was not going to stay one day less than Westmoreland. That's what everybody said. But nonetheless, he was there over four years.

Q: Because I remember that prior to his going there, the relations with the press were terrible, and he began to...

ADAMSON: He did a marvelous job with the press. He started background briefings with senior officers, intelligence officers, and the others. He'd invite in the network representatives, as well as the press services, and they appreciated it.

Q: Of course, the whole program in Vietnam was the largest in the world, certainly at that time.

ADAMSON: Yes.

Q: It was different from anything we had anywhere else. There were questions and pulling and tugging and all the rest of it, and it's historically, still, an extremely important subject. Maybe you'd better spend some time on Vietnam and get into that a little bit.

Escalation of U.S. Military Presence Triggered Decline of American Position and of JUSPAO

ADAMSON: It's hard to know where to start. If a person doesn't really know all the things that we were doing, it's kind of hard to discuss the various aspects of it. I think it's best if I dwell on one thing that bothered me a great deal. When we decided, instead of just having advisors there, we were going to send in troops after the Tonkin Gulf attack on one of our ships, that's when we began escalating, which means going up. But in my opinion, we began going down. Several reasons. One, we were in a hurry. The war in Vietnam had been going on for centuries, not just a few years. The hostile groups were many, not just Communists and white hats or good guys. We were pushing in a hurry, instead of letting the Vietnamese learn how to do it their own way. I think that was our first and our biggest mistake: we were impatient.

Q: “Get out of the way, Charlie. I'll do it.”

ADAMSON: So as a result of which, I was rather pleased when I began to hear from the Vietnamese, “This is our war. Go home.” For a long time, you see, they were letting us do it. And for a long time, we would not give them the weapons to have the same kind of fighting capability that our forces had. I don't know whether we didn't trust them or we didn't have them or just hadn't thought about it. But an Army War College classmate of mine came out and he was working with General Abrams. They were upgrading the armaments for one division at a time, and they were also doing field training. Instead of pulling them off the line to learn about the weapons, they'd set up units to do training in the field. All of those were hopeful signs, but they had begun too late, in my opinion. I think as the action-reaction on both sides kept going, it had enabled North Vietnam to not only build up the Viet Cong cadres, but to install themselves strongly militarily in the south and to build up their supply chain so that it was one of the most efficient, incredible things that you could imagine. That was the background to what I wanted to say.

After a year and a half in Saigon, I was transferred to Laos. I said, “Why couldn't we have done in Vietnam what we're doing in Laos? We're helping the Lao fight their war.” If it hadn't been for the ability of North Vietnam to build up and use the supply chain they had going, I don't think they would have succeeded in taking over in Laos.

Q: You've mentioned that our military was putting emphasis on itself, and more or less telling the Vietnamese, “Get out of the way.” Let's think about the information and propaganda aspects of our effort. Were we doing the same thing?

ADAMSON: Sure. We were doing exactly the same thing. We had set up our crew in every one of the media; in production of motion pictures for both theaters and the television programs; operation of a government printing plant to print all kinds of propaganda and brochures; radio training and radio station construction; and we were doing all the leaflets, the air-drops of leaflets and what have you. There was not very much that the Vietnamese were doing other than serve as staff for the JUSPAO operation. They were supposed to be trainees and so on.

I had considerable opposition in both Laos and Thailand, because my duty was to turn over our surrogate operation to the nationals of the country and give them complete responsibility and authority. Several of my staff in Thailand were very opposed to turning it over. They said, “They'll never do the job. They won't be able to fight this insurgency if we get out of the business.” But we did; we got out of it. We turned over equipment and personnel to the government, but we didn't do it in Vietnam.

Q: In Vietnam, given this type of policy, what do you think were some of the most successful things that we did, despite that?

ADAMSON: The fact that we had television programs that people could receive in the Delta area from those U.S. Navy operated CONNIES [Constellations] that were flying the transmitter run, people enjoyed those. They were very useful. We helped produce films

about Vietnam, (not just about the U.S. forces and others that were coming around). We had radio programs with Vietnamese music and well known artists, Pham Zuy and the gals. They were very much appreciated. In other words, that was something that did make a contribution.

Q: You could tell. You knew they were looking at those programs, and you could deduce that they were at least enjoying them.

ADAMSON: That's right. There were several daily newspapers in Vietnamese that they themselves ran. The extent to which they used our press bulletins and output and so on, I don't know. They attended the Five o'clock Follies and listened to the briefings about how the war was going. They didn't find out much about what ARVN was doing—Armed Forces Vietnam—because we were always talking to the foreign journalists about the U.S. presence. That's what the briefing was all about.

As a result of the printing plant that we helped establish, when the big election came along—I'm not sure that was a good thing, but that's another story—they were able to print all of these things to tell about the different parties, the different candidates and so on, and get them out—period. That they did; we didn't do it. But they did it with their own facilities.So I would guess that had things turned out differently we would have left some bequest with them that they could have carried on and done better than they'd ever done before.

Nevertheless, we had a lot of good people up there working, and we lost a few. We lost one of our young officers. As a matter of fact, he was on loan from the Department. When the North Vietnamese attacked Hue, Willis was captured and held prisoner for a long time, along with some of our Philippine employees of the radio station up there. One of our NBC contract employees at the T.V. station in Hue was killed. Life wasn't easy out in the provinces. When guys went out there to live, it wasn't the best living accommodations in the world.

Q: You know, these many years later, the Agency has agreed to put a plaque in the lobby.

ADAMSON: I just got my new USIA bulletin with all the news in it, especially the news that you were going to interview me in Honolulu.

Q: From what you say, then, it was very difficult for the Vietnamese to have creative ideas that would go up the line in information or persuasiveness.

ADAMSON: That would be my response. I don't know whether they were cowed or discouraged or just didn't feel that there was room for them to become involved and to try to do very much.

Q: Did you get any feeling that, on the one hand, they perhaps thought the Americans knew best, or at least what the Americans were going to do.

ADAMSON: Let me back up. I think they felt in most areas that the Americans were going to do what they wanted to do. But I want to back up a little bit. There were Vietnamese counterparts who had ideas and were not reluctant to tell us what they thought. John McGowan had developed some very good relationships with members of the press, and that worked out very well. We had people in the television-motion picture production area, where it was their ideas as to what ought to be produced, to tell the people what they were going to do. They were completely responsible for some of the radio programs that were on their stations. So I must modify what I'd said earlier. But the problem was I think they were reluctant to go too far, because they felt that we had the resources, it was our money. And there was a certain extent—”These area people who have had worldwide experience, and we're just local boys, and we don't know as much as they know.” So all of these things entered into it.

Q: Did that begin to change when we entered the phase of Vietnamization?

ADAMSON: I left in May 1968 for Laos, and that was just really beginning getting going. So that is something you need to ask some others. Now, one person you're going to find will have a lot of answers of the later period is John Hogan, who is here. So when you get to John, that will be very good.

Q: Why don't you go on about Vietnam, and we'll pick up on Laos the next time.

ADAMSON: I don't know what else we have on Vietnam that we haven't covered. One of the things is, of course, I haven't explained just what kind of an operation we had in detail. I've mentioned the fact that we were trying to help the Vietnamese to build their T.V. stations, their radio stations, their printing plant, their motion picture production plant, and their skills.

The Navy was flying these two Constellations with T.V. transmitters aboard, and then when the Tet attack of January and February 1968 came along and they knocked out the downtown radio station, we then had to get their broadcasts somehow aboard, so we put them aboard the same planes that flew a pattern, and we put one of their best Vietnamese announcers on board the plane, so he would have some taped shows and then he would also have the news, which he was getting from this little two-way radio. Of course, they knocked out the T.V. station in Hue. They damaged another station; it hadn't really gone on the air yet in Can Tho, in the Delta. But that was about it. These were the kinds of things.

In addition, let me go back with an inventory. We had a JUSPAO representative in each province. Many of those were military, not any particular branch. It could be Navy or Air Force or Army, although it was Army for the most part. They were advisors to the local Vietnamese military command, not the U.S. But they worked very closely, of course, with whatever U.S. units happened to be stationed in that same area. They were our source of information as to what kinds of programs would be needed, what kinds of leaflets were needed, because they knew the order of battle and where the VC, as well as the North

Vietnamese units were located, and what kinds of things they would suggest. So these provincial representatives were extremely important, but, also, they were very isolated. That was why I mentioned earlier we had three planes assigned to JUSPAO, and we would use those to send materials out to the province, keep them supplied, and so we would travel out, usually on weekends, to visit one or two or three provinces to see how they were doing.

Q: In general, it seems to me that with respect to the enemy, you were trying to get them to surrender as a major policy.

ADAMSON: That's right.

Q: In terms of the populace of North Vietnam, trying to get them to distrust their government, is that right?

ADAMSON: That's correct.

Q: And as far as in Vietnam itself, the south, you were trying to get them to be friendly to the U.S., on the one hand, and the allies, but it didn't have much political content with respect to their government, is that right?

ADAMSON: How can we sort this out. The objective to get the North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam and the Viet Cong to quit and surrender, I would guess, had less than a fraction of a percent success. To get the villagers to distrust and not cooperate with the Viet Cong, that was a different story. They cooperated at the point of a gun. In other words, they knew their life was in danger if they didn't cooperate with the VCs and others who came into their village. But they also found out that their life was in danger if they didn't cooperate with the ARVN when they came in, the government forces. So they walked a tightrope the whole time.

In the cities, however, it was a different story. I think there it was, to a certain extent, business as usual in the political field. They all had their own ideas as to whether they were going to be with their old familiar group that had its own leadership or these new imports from North Vietnam. Well, of course, Big Minh was born in South Vietnam. But a lot of the people that were involved in the government were Northerners. So it's very hard. I don't know if we ever did really get a clear picture. Doug Pike has written some of the most knowledgeable material about the Viet Cong and their background and their beliefs. Don Rocklin has interviewed more captured Viet Cong than any other single person and has a better understanding of what makes them tick. But I don't think that in our psychological warfare, we ever did really find out what to do. At one of the weekly meetings over at the military command headquarters, MACV, the PSYOPS people were telling how many leaflets they had dropped, in what sectors, here and there, and so on, and they had it in the number of thousands or tonnage, I'm not sure which. And General Creighton Abrams pulled his cigar out of his mouth and said, “Well, what the hell does that mean? Did anybody quit? Did anybody show up?” The good old questions about “Are you being successful?” That was one of the biggest problems we ever had.

Q: A broad-brush thing, too, here at the last part of this tape. It seemed to me the military, in the beginning, had almost a wishful, magical thinking about PSYOPS and how the whole information program was going to do wonders, and then as time went by, they became terribly cynical.

ADAMSON: Yes. I agree with you. There was a time when we thought, “We won't have to fire a shot. Just fire out a few leaflets.”

Q: Right.

ADAMSON: In other words, they had an exaggerated expectation of what psychological warfare could do. We worked with the sixth PSYOPS Battalion out there very closely. As

a matter of fact, they got their policy guidance from JUSPAO. Of course, when I got up to Laos, the guys down there got their policy guidance from me.

Q: Officers in the field in Vietnam, including the military and others that were attached, were they giving useful input on some of these problems to you?

ADAMSON: Yes and no. They gave us the best understanding we could have gotten from any source, I think, of the situation in their province. But again, the problem is you can't produce much for that single province from abroad. You have to try to generalize the material and then sometimes it doesn't respond. But we did have the capability of doing small quantities on the spot in the province for very specific targets, so that was one way we got around that problem.

Q: I think maybe we will stop now. You are still in Saigon and getting ready to go to Laos. When we pick up again, if you have any additional things to say about Saigon, we'll get into that.

ADAMSON: I think now I'd like to compare Laos and Vietnam.

Q: Okay. We will stop here and start next with Laos.

ADAMSON: All right, sir.

—

Q: We will pick up in 1968, when you were assigned as public affairs officer to Laos. You want to tell us about that?

ADAMSON: I moved on a direct transfer from Saigon, South Vietnam, to Vientiane, Laos, the administrative capital of the kingdom. At that time, we had a very complete roster of personnel, plus our branch posts in Luang Prabang, the Royal Capital in the North, in Savannakhet and in Pakse. The principal problem, I think everyone will remember, is that

we were there primarily because the North Vietnamese were there, both in their efforts to conquer the tribesmen, the Hmong or Meo as they were better known, in the Plaine des Jarres, in that area, and because the Ho Chi Minh Trail to resupply in South Vietnam ran through Laos, almost the entire length of the country, from an area level with Hanoi all the way down to below I Corps (the northernmost region in Vietnam).

Objectives in Laos

The job was twofold: we were trying to help the Lao run an information program and a counterinsurgency-type program. We had been doing most of their printing for them. We produced the motion pictures for them, and we helped with their radio broadcasts. In other words, we had in our radio shop personnel on our payroll, but we also had personnel on their payroll, and we were working together with them in the production of programs. They handled the basic cultural programs and the news programs, and we handled the feature-type programs that were designed to form attitudes, if you will, regarding the conflict with the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese.

Effectiveness in Laos

We also were, of course, operating a very good library system, both in Vientiane and in the branch posts. It was intensively used primarily by secondary school students, although we had a number of adults who were regulars, but the majority of our users were the school students.Other tasks we had were leaflet drops which, in effect, were an extension of the program in South Vietnam. We didn't do them, but we controlled the content and the drop areas. So every time they'd plan a new series of leaflets, up would come the draft copy for our review or Clyde Slayton—(he served in Hong Kong for so long)—would bring them up personally.

Q: How big was your staff in Laos.

ADAMSON: I had a deputy PAO, a motion picture officer, a radio officer, a press officer, a cultural affairs officer, and the American secretary, plus the branch PAOs.

Q: Did you have military assigned to you?

ADAMSON: We had one military assigned to us, a Major who was supposed to be liaison between ourselves and the U.S. military mission there. He was, in effect, full time and had an office in our space. We worked very closely with the PSYOPS command of the Lao armed forces, and had direct contact with the Chief of Staff.

Q: Wasn't there a major military buildup in Thailand across the border from Laos at that time? ADAMSON: Let's go back to what I was saying the other day, when I was comparing the Vietnam operation with the Lao operation. We were helping the Lao to fight their own war, and so it was the supply chain that was extremely important. So the military buildup was both that which was running air strikes against the North Vietnamese, both in the Plaine des Jarres and in the Ho Chi Minh Trail, but it was also the ordnance and material supply system coming in for the Lao armed forces.

Q: I see.

ADAMSON: The thing I was trying to get back to was just that, that in South Vietnam we had to send in personnel on everything and to do the job, to try to do the job, because we were impatient and didn't think the South Vietnamese forces could handle it, whereas in Laos, we were much more patient, and we did have training programs for the Lao, and we supplied the materials, and they supplied manpower.

Q: I would suppose one thing that might be different in program there, the Lao, defending their own land against what is essentially an outsider, as opposed to Vietnam, where you just fight the north-south; you had the same race.

ADAMSON: Well, it was similar, because in South Vietnam, you had the local Communists, the Viet Cong, as we called them, and in Laos, you had the Pathet Lao. Historically, of course, you had the neutralists, the rightists, and the left-left wing. When they had the mixed government—what do you call it?

Q: They had the Russian term, Troika, the three.

ADAMSON: A tripartite or coalition government. They all had agreed as to who would hold what jobs. I was not there yet, but I heard there was a security problem, and the Pathet Lao retreated to the northern area past the Plaine des Jarres to Sam Neua with Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma's half-brother going in that direction, and his staying on as prime minister in Vientiane. But the problem that we tried to face, the same as we did in South Vietnam, was that there were the local Communists as well as the North Vietnamese, and so we were helping the Lao Government, the Lao Ministry of Information, and the Lao armed forces, to produce materials, to prepare pamphlets, leaflets, and so on for both the population, as well as for the local Communists, to try to dissuade them and to gather support.

One thing to remember in Laos and, I believe, to a great extent the same in South Vietnam, the PSYOPS was a concern of the military, yes, but they weren't oriented to try psychological operations against the enemy. They were directing it at their own troops and family. In other words, it was a morale operation. That was their primary objective. When I was in Saigon, they had a mission from Taiwan, and the Chinese, of course, were teaching them how to do it, because that's the Chinese orientation, too, toward their own people, not toward the enemy. So I thought that was quite interesting. We tried to get them to think in terms of both, instead of just having it as a morale operation. But the morale operation, of course, was extremely important. So they went their way on that one.

We had very good relations with the local government; there was no question about that, in all spheres. As a companion effort, the Agency for International Development was

really working hard on developing the Lao language school system. Up until that point, Lao language education only went up to the first few grades, and, of course, out in the rural areas, that was as far as anybody ever went anyway. But the higher education was primarily in Chinese language schools and French language schools or in English language schools. So AID was helping to develop text materials and all of that in Lao. We, every year, had a pavilion or display at the That Luang Fair. The king came to our pavilion, and he was a tall, very tall, handsome fellow. His wife was typical Lao, very short and very, very sweet. He came and was looking through, and we had a display of the Lao language school project and the materials that were there. He spent so much time there that the other exhibitors, including the Soviet Union, all thought he was never going to come to them, because he stopped to look at all the textbooks. He was very impressed by it, and he hadn't known about this project before, all of which goes to prove that exhibits at international fairs do pay dividends and are worthwhile.

I can't really say much more about how we did it. I wish I could say more about how effective we were. One thing we were able to do was to respond to very specific situations. The Japanese got the contract to build the Pha Ngum dam, not on the Mekong River, but on the Pha River, coming in across the plains. That was, of course, to help provide electric power, as well as control floods. The Pathet Lao were trying very hard to scare both the Japanese contractors off, as well as all of the villagers around the area. So frequently we would find that all of a sudden, all the villagers had disappeared. The Pothead Lao had scared them sufficiently that they would migrate. So our task was to drop some leaflets on these disappearing villagers to get them to go home, to get them to go back where they were. They were really torn between the two sides, because they'd go home, and they'd be talked into leaving again. So here they were, back and forth, almost in a constant state of anxiety, which was not good for the villagers, but the point I'm making is that at least we had some noticeable degree of success with the materials that we dropped in on them. That was an airplane drop. The Lao had the air capability to drop leaflets.

Q: Incidentally, going back to Vietnam for a moment and relating to this, I understood the Chu Huo program to bring in people who had come across to surrender, that most of those people did have a leaflet. Is that correct?

ADAMSON: That is correct. The leaflets offered them amnesty, offered them an opportunity to become integrated into national life again. And when they came in, they had the leaflet that made the offer in hand.

Q: Was that true in Laos, as well?

ADAMSON: No. We didn't have what you could call a similar program. There was no real amnesty program. What we were trying to do is just get those people who were in contention to stay put.

Q: But the much maligned leaflet drops did have benefits.

ADAMSON: Yes. My feeling is that when they were very specific, they could be successful. When they were just saying, “So and so's a bad guy,” you never knew whether it was successful or not. It didn't offer something for people to do. It was merely trying to say something to them without any response either possible or requested. So I've learned from that, that message has to have some response-ability. I'm not talking about responsibility; I'm talking about response-ability. I think that's important in most any information effort, that you really need to present it in such a way that you can get a reaction.

Q: Right. Specific.

ADAMSON: The addressee shouldn't be permitted the luxury of being indifferent.

Q: Going back to Laos, didn't you have a special program for the Meo?

ADAMSON: The only thing that was special about it is that we had Meo employees. We tried Meo language, and so on. But it was no different, really. Obviously, they were bearing the brunt of all of the ground fighting, and their Air Force with their T-28s was doing most of the aerial support for them, but nonetheless, it was not a different program.

Q: How long were you in Laos, Keith?

ADAMSON: I was there two years, almost two years. I was there from the end of May 1968 until early April 1970

Q: So by the time you left, the program was beginning to change somewhat?

ADAMSON: By the time I left, it was still going pretty much at the same rate, except for one thing. We were beginning to turn over the direction and the responsibility for the non-U.S. information and cultural exchange program to the Lao. We had turned over to them the job of printing the periodicals and more of the radio program production. Of course, I forgot to mention that, through the Colombo Plan, they had some nice new transmitters in Luang Prabang and in Pakse. So they were doing local programming, which we had helped to get people trained to do. One of the reasons, I guess, why I was selected to go to Thailand was because we were in the process of turning over the task to the Thai. We were no longer the surrogate information service for the Lao; we were turning it over to them to do on their own, being available to advise and help if needed. That was what they wanted to do and what Lyndon Johnson and Prime Minister Kittikachorn agreed would happen in Thailand, that we would turn over the job to the Thai Government, instead of our continuing to do it. So that was when I was transferred to Thailand to do what I'd been doing in Laos.

Q: Who was the effective person in charge of government in Laos when you were there?

ADAMSON: The prime minister was Prince Souvanna Phouma.

Q: Did you meet him?

ADAMSON: Yes, we played tennis, as a matter of fact, almost every week. He was a delightful guy, and his special assistant, La Norindr, who later became the first Lao ambassador to Moscow, became a very good friend of mine. He and I played tennis with our ambassador and the prime minister.

Q: I gather you made a lot of good friends with the Lao.

ADAMSON: Yes. The Lao people were very likable, very delightful. It's hard to understand how they could sustain a war effort for so long, being such a peace-loving people. They were just very pleasant, very nice. Of course, as a result of those friendships there, we've ended up sponsoring a great many Lao, after the government fell to the Communists, who fled to refugee camps in Thailand so that they could come to the United States. So we have a fairly large Lao family now.

Q: You mean here in Honolulu.

ADAMSON: Here in Honolulu.

Q: Lao people must have gone through a lot of changes, because I was in Bangkok in 1954, and the U.S. Government had its first operation in Vientiane at that time, and it was regarded as being extreme hardship. They had everyone living together in one place. I remember a statistic which may have been wrong, that there was one Western-trained doctor for all of the Lao area.

ADAMSON: That wouldn't surprise me. Medical facilities in Laos were limited, but they had improved tremendously by the time I got there. One was a USAID-supported hospital operation. Most of the personnel, nurses and other medical personnel were Filipino. The Embassy had its own clinic, its own doctor, and he was German. So the Lao themselves did not really have much. They had a pre-med training program run by the French.

Q: But what I'm getting at is over a period of 14 years, these people living in a rather primitive area, which even the French, I think, gave only minimal control up there, suddenly, over a period of 14 years, Americans had just come in every direction. It must have made quite an impact.

ADAMSON: It did. By the time I got there—in other words, I can believe that the conditions that you'd heard existed in '54 existed—or didn't exist, to put it that way. And that there was during the subsequent years— particularly since '61, '62, when we really began to get involved in Laos, in that period of six years, a great deal had been accomplished. Most of that which is in place was imported and put in place; it was not yet evident that the Lao had been trained to do it themselves in the medical field. Of course, one of the problems that many of our Lao refugee friends—family, we call them—said was that they had deaths in the family due to lack of medicine, due to lack of medical care. Of course, even worse, when the family would send medicines from France, through the pouch to the French Embassy, and then the French Embassy in Vientiane would mail them to, say, Pakse, they were confiscated by the new Communist government before they ever got to the patient. So the father, in this one family's case, died. Medical facilities were still—and are as yet—not really available to the Lao. Very limited.Transfer to Post as PAO, Thailand

Q: You were talking about being transferred to Bangkok.

ADAMSON: That was in April of '70.

Q: What was the situation there?

ADAMSON: The situation was that President Nixon and Prime Minister Kittikachorn had signed an agreement that the U.S. should get out of running the counterinsurgency program for the Thai Government. It was agreed that we would train their people and transfer physical equipment, our inventory of the mobile units on the motion picture side

and all of that sort of thing over to the Thai Ministry of Information for operations. So when I got there, that's where we began.

Q: What was the situation in Cambodia at that time, when you were being transferred?

ADAMSON: When I was being transferred, it was still possible to make a visit to Cambodia.

Q: Could you?

ADAMSON: Yes. then it began to deteriorate from that point on. G. Lewis Schmidt was my predecessor in Thailand. He had been there several years. He briefed me on what was happening. You should interview Lew on this aspect of it, because he can discuss it better than I. But he did not agree completely with orders that he had gotten from Washington.

Q: Yes, I understood that.

ADAMSON: He felt that they were moving much too fast, it was not going to happen, and many of the personnel that remained on after he left felt the same way. So it was not an easy period. But we were told to press ahead, which we did, and get back to operating a normal USIS operation.

Q: We are discussing your tour in Bangkok.

ADAMSON: Right. There were difficulties, of course, of getting out of the business that we'd been in for quite some time and quite heavily. I can't recite them off the top of my head, but we had a large number of branch posts out of which we were operating the counterinsurgency program, in cooperation with the provincial governors, the chaoqueng, for the areas where there were serious insurgencies.

Difficulties in Turning Counter Insurgency Programs Over to Thai Government

The task of training people to take over and closing those posts which would no longer be necessary was going to disrupt the lives of a great many people, both our American staff, as well as our Thai staff. Number one problem was in transferring personnel. The equipment was material stuff, but on the question of personnel, the salaries to be paid by the Thai Government for similar work were way below the scale that we had for our foreign nationals. So they were going to have a very difficult time going to work for the Thai Government.

In many cases, we had people who had been with us for years out in these branch posts, so the task then was to try to keep them either in a different branch post or in the headquarters operation in Bangkok. There was a great deal of argument as to whether or not Thailand was really run from Bangkok. Many of our branch PAOs said that it was important to keep the branch post operations going, because they were critical to the understanding of U.S. policy, U.S.-Thai relations in that area. But again, in effect, the Thai Government itself had been trying to decentralize, had been trying to get regional operations for the military and for the information and for various ministries going, with a notable lack of success.

So Thailand was really still run from Bangkok. I made the decision that we were going to put most of our eggs in that basket and only keep one northern branch post and one southern branch post.

Q: To go back a bit, as you say, the President's administration policy was to turn over the counterinsurgency programs in Indochina and in Thailand to the local government, and that Lew Schmidt, for one, and others felt that much was going to be lost if this was not done in an orderly manner. My understanding was that they more or less wanted to axe it from Washington.

ADAMSON: Washington just said, “You can't wait.” And Lew said, “That's a mistake. We need to go slow, we need to make sure it's done properly. We need to make sure that the Thai can operate it.” That was his concern.

We did our best to make sure that the Thai could operate it. We had very good training programs. We put all projectors and other equipment into intensive repair and refurbishing so that all would be in excellent condition when transferred. Finally, one great day, the Deputy Prime Minister, Praphat Charousatien, and Ambassador Unger and I on our side gathered before a long line of jeeps, mobile units, with motion picture projectors out on a series of tables USIS and Ministry personnel lined up for the formal transfer. That was just the beginning. That was the symbolic beginning. The training programs continued for their personnel, and the transfer of equipment was made in an orderly fashion, so there was a quite clear record that it left our inventory and went on theirs.

The reason that the Deputy Prime Minister, who was also Minister of Interior, was there was because his governors were going to be the operating heads of the counterinsurgency program in selected provinces. It was not going to be somebody in Bangkok who would be operating it. So the Minister of Interior took over that responsibility, since that Ministry is responsible for the governors.

Q: Some felt that the local government, whether in Thailand or Laos or Vietnam, but perhaps more in Thailand, really didn't have a tremendous amount of enthusiasm for, let us say, PSYOPS per se if it came to their money. It's all right as long as Uncle Sam wants to spend money and buy jeeps and whatever. That's one thing I'd like to ask your reaction to, if they genuinely supported it.

The other thing is if they did, if they didn't see it more as a political device to keep them in power.

ADAMSON: I couldn't prove it in a court of law, but my impression is that they wanted to see it done. They didn't know how to do it. I don't know if they really had a lot of confidence in their ability do it. For example, there was one radio broadcaster in Khon Kaen, who did a tremendous job of talking the insurgents into town and away from their living in the jungle and fighting the Thai forces. It's because he talked to them as an individual. In other words, he realized that usually the guy listening to a radio is the same guy that would be sitting across the table from you, having a cup of tea. And that was the way he broadcast. Everybody else in Thailand was making speeches, as if they were orating before a crowd of thousands, and they were ineffective. They never could communicate.

Q: That's a very interesting point.

ADAMSON: So I have a feeling that it was primarily that they didn't know how to do this kind of a job; not that they didn't agree in principle that it was important.

Staying in power? I don't think that had much to do with it, because power was still, at that point, a decision of a few people at the top, and elections were not necessary in order to decide who was going to run things. But obviously, the program, once it was transferred to the Thai Government, lost a great deal. Lew [Schmidt] was right. In other words, it would not be the same program, it would not be as effective.

Q: What was your judgment? As the U.S. was turning over equipment and everything in Vietnam, the Vietnamization program, and in Laos and now in Thailand, obviously it was apparent that the U.S. was beginning to draw back. Were people getting nervous on this score?

ADAMSON: I'm not sure if I understand exactly what you meant by “beginning to draw back.”

Q: I mean shrinking from responsibilities and expansion, contracting now. Of course, that was leading, under President Nixon's program, to eventual withdrawal from Vietnam.

ADAMSON: Right. There were two things involved. One, a realization that we probably shouldn't have gone in the way we did in the first place. Limited warfare is nice on a textbook, but it doesn't work out very well in practice because of the political aspects of it. So I'd always felt, as I mentioned earlier in our discussions, that we would have been a lot better off had we behaved in Vietnam as we did in Laos, and not try to do everything, do it immediately and do it ourselves, but be more patient and assist them to the extent we could.

Q: I didn't make myself clear. My question is: in Thailand, the Thai people, the Thai Government, did they feel that the United States was beginning to back away from them, as you were giving this material to them?

ADAMSON: Quite the opposite. The reason we were giving it to them is that they were getting very upset that we were taking over Thai Government prerogatives.

Q: I see.

ADAMSON: We were much too much involved. In other words, their sense of sovereignty was being bruised at a minimum, and it was the same thing that was happening in a lot of places. Their pride in being Thai made them insist that we just not do things that foreign governments are not supposed to do. So I think that was largely responsible for it was their reaction against our continuing to play such a large role, rather than their feeling that we were withdrawing or backing out and showing less interest.

Q: In Thailand, you also had a lot of American military personnel.

ADAMSON: Correct.

Q: Did you have problems on that score?

ADAMSON: There were problems—surprisingly few, though, is what amazed me. Around the bases at Korat and Sattahip in the south, the beginning of the supply route, and in Bangkok itself, of course, we didn't have such large numbers, but it was R&R for a lot of guys. I don't think the Thai were happy with the neighborhoods that grew up around the whorehouses and all of that. But we never had the kinds of community relations problems, thank God, in Thailand that we had, say, in Germany or in England or in France. It was just a different environment.

Q: Were the problems different in, say Bangkok, than up in the northeast, around the airfields up there?

ADAMSON: No, they weren't much different. It's just that “in the country,” you had less sophistication, and also there wasn't the caste system of separating that part of town and those people off from all of the nice people.

Q: I've forgotten when the famous Tet Offensive was. Were you in Bangkok then?

Return Briefly to a Discussion of 1968 Tet Offensive in Vietnam

ADAMSON: In the famous Tet Offensive, I was in Saigon. That was January 31-February 1 of 1968.

Q: Where were you at that time?

ADAMSON: Where was I? I had just gotten back from leave, and had had a luau in my garden for practically everybody from JUSPAO. It happened one day or two days later, and I got up and got in my car and headed for the office at about 4:00 a.m., found myself, as I pulled up to the office, facing two Marine guards with rifles pointed right at me. I dimmed the lights quickly and turned on my inside lights, and then got in there to try to

begin to find out what was going on. That was the big problem. We didn't have the kinds of communications that we had for the mini Tet that came up in May. It was a very hectic period as we began to find out they had blasted one of our guys, who just barely escaped, over at the radio station.

Q: Then they were attacking the embassy.

ADAMSON: They did, yes. They put some shots through the glass doors. George Jacobson on that particular night was sleeping in a residential area on the compound of the Embassy, and he, with his side arm, got involved in the defense of the place, because they were coming over that back wall where he was. I don't remember all of the details of it but nonetheless there was quite a little fire fight at the embassy itself. They didn't come our way over at JUSPAO, which was a military BOQ, as well as our offices. e got quite a few rockets coming into that area, but obviously they didn't hit us. That was chaotic, and we immediately, of course, began to gear up for that kind of a situation in the future. I had a little 5-watt two-way radio and we had on our own circuit so we could keep in touch in the future and not be caught by surprise.

Q: The other side felt they had tremendous propaganda victory, particularly in the United States, because of Tet. But many commentators since say, yes, that they did have a propaganda victory in the U.S., but not a true victory.

ADAMSON: They didn't have a true victory, but psychologically, they did. They showed what kind of military capability they had.

Q: For the U.S. target or the Vietnamese and the U.S. targets?

ADAMSON: For both. Herb Block, if you remember at that time, did a cartoon which had everything in shambles, and a guy down under the desk saying, “Everything's okay. They didn't get the mimeograph machine.” So I had that enlarged and gave a copy to Barry Zorthian, and I kept one for myself. It was sort of a hollow response that we had to

make, because here we'd been saying how great we were doing, and things coming out of MACV, statements about progress and so on, and then to have this happen didn't sit very well. It obviously was, as you say, a propaganda victory for them.

One of the real concerns I had was that we seemed to have lost our credibility, at least the military had. The media, U.S. media included, believed Hanoi before they would believe MACV, even though they didn't have access to confirm the information from Hanoi. They just believed what Hanoi said, and they could follow up on our side and examine the facts to a certain extent. It was a mess in many respects.

Effect of Having Had a USIS Program in Thailand for Many Years

Q: To come back to Bangkok, one thing about Thailand, unlike Vietnam, is that we have been in Thailand with a rather substantial information program for a long time.

ADAMSON: Oh, yes.

Q: As a consequence, we have certainly sent many important Thai to our country on exchange programs and so on. This must have had some impact, even when you were there.

ADAMSON: Oh, definitely. While I was there, we were celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Fulbright treaty, as well as the signing of an AID-type economic assistance agreement. It was amazing to go back through the records and show what we were doing in 1950, and what had happened in 20 years. In the exchange of persons program, for example, at the beginning of that program, we were sending doctors, nurses, librarians, you name it, for all kinds of specialized training. In 1970, they had not only their own training of their undergraduates in all these areas, but they had graduate schools in most of them, and very few medical personnel went abroad for training anymore. Highly specialized skills were the only ones that they went abroad for.

The Binational Center (Known as AOA) in Bangkok—A Very Effective Organization

The exchange program had accomplished that kind of change during the 20 years from the time it really began. When I was there, of course, the most visible and most popular elements of our cultural activity was the English language training school. But the interesting part was that it was operated by the American University Association. In other words, it was founded by alumni of American universities. The man who was the executive director of it and getting along in years, Phra Bnisab Soukumvit, was a graduate, I think, of Harvard. One of the things that impressed me, and I've talked about it many times since I retired, was that he rarely talked about Harvard. He talked about the people that he met while he was a student in the United States, the people who had been kind to him, who had invited him into their homes for a meal or just to get acquainted. That he remembered best. Obviously, he was .proud of his university degree and he wouldn't say anything bad about Harvard or he'd be saying bad things about himself as that was a part of him. But what he remembered most was the personal contact and the opportunity to get into a home and to talk with others. That was the way they felt. So I keep saying that if you want to improve relations between the United States and another country, invite the students and the exchange people that you see into your home or take them to lunch; do something that is personal, not professional at all.

Q: It's interesting. In my time, I met an education official in the northeast, and later, by chance, I bumped into him in Washington. He was on an exchange. We had gotten to know each other reasonably well, and I asked him what his main impression was of the U.S. He'd just finished a tour around our South. That would have been in 1955. He had seen our newspapers stacked on corners, as they did in Washington at that time, and people just put their nickels and dimes and took the newspaper. It wasn't in a box or anything. And he just couldn't get over the honesty of the system; that was his major impression.

ADAMSON: Oh, absolutely. Just like my assistant from Cairo couldn't get over the fact that bricklayers earn more than college professors in the United States. He couldn't understand how things could get that upside down.

Back to the English language school. We had enrollments in the Bangkok center itself of 7,000 students a year, and a lot of other activities. Eventually, while I was there, we put up the funds, built a new library as a part of that same complex, which is not too far from our Embassy, and closed our own library and put all the books over there so that the AUA, the alumni association, was, in effect, really taking over responsibility for most of the “U.S.-Thai cultural relations.” We still continued the book translation printing program, we still were responsible for the international visitor program, and so on.

Q: Do you know, 18 years later, whether that's still going strong, that association?

ADAMSON: I don't know, but I'm just assuming that it is

Q: I would certainly assume so, yes.

ADAMSON: We tried, of course, to get the English teaching programs going out in the provinces, in our branch posts, and some of them did very well. They ran their own libraries, but the English teaching program was more difficult, because you had a shortage of teachers in the provinces, and the duty fell on the wives of PAOs and the business community and the consulates, where they existed. But that was a very interesting period for, one, the transition I've described on the counterinsurgency side, and, two, our trying to get back to our own kind of program that is legitimate for the U.S.—to try to tell other people what we are and what we're like.

While I was there, also, the famous Guam Doctrine of Richard Nixon came into being. That was where the Embassy was very concerned. I'm not sure. I was concerned that they would feel we were backing off, and that we needed very much in our information efforts to try to demonstrate what had happened in the intervening years about the capabilities

of the other countries, so that instead of the U.S. doing it all, we would be partners and be able to do it together much more on an equal footing than had been expected in the past. That was a line I was pushing just before I got word that next spring my new duty would be Washington, and then I got further word that one could get—what was the bonus—four or five percent bonus on one's annuity if one would retire by December 31.

Retirement

Q: What year was this?

ADAMSON: It was 1970. Sounds very much like 1988. They're pushing people to retire if they possibly can. Anyway, I requested early retirement from Washington. I had over 30 years in, I was over 50, so there was no problem on that score. Lionel Mosley sent back a telegram saying, “You had two years of your government service when you made no contribution to the retirement program. If you'll send us a check for $500 (or something like that) and so many cents, you'll get credit for those two years.” I didn't see that answer, but the DCM, George Newman, called and said, “Ah, damn, Keith, you can't afford not to retire. I all of a sudden realize here I am working my tail off for so much, and if I'd retire, I can get 75 percent of that and not do a damn thing!” I hadn't seen the telegram yet. But, anyway, I did. I retired before the month was out. My last day of business was the 31st of December 1970.

Q: Go on, Keith.

ADAMSON: As I was saying, they made a very good offer that was hard to refuse to retire by December 31 instead of waiting 'until April or May that next year, after I got to Washington. So I did. I came to Honolulu and immediately tried to find a place to live that I could afford and all that sort of thing, which I'm sure everyone else goes through.

Life in Retirement: Work at East-West Center, Honolulu

But what happened was, I was invited to be the luncheon speaker at the Hawaii State Association of Foreign Student Advisors, and my speech dwelt largely on what I said just a little bit ago about the importance of the personal contact, the family visit, the home visit, that people I talked with remembered and talked about more than they did their university experience, how great this professor was or that.

So within two days, I was asked if I would be chairman of the host family program of the East West Center. So I did, and had a marvelous group of people who were very enthusiastic about trying to give students an opportunity to get into homes and have other experiences that they wouldn't have if they were living in a dormitory on campus.

Of course, I also found that my neighbor turned out to be Ambassador Sam Gilstrap, with whom I'd had duty in Cairo, Egypt, and had visited in several of his posts, Mexico, particularly. He was the Vice Chancellor of the East West Center, as well as assistant director of the East West Population Institute. He called me one day and asked if I had a resume, and I said, “No, but I think I'd better find something to do here instead of vegetating.” So I put a resume together and handed it to him and said, “Why?”

He said, “Well, I am turning 65, and that is the mandatory retirement age, and I called Washington and I had a friend look in your file, and I liked what I heard.” So he said, “I want to recommend you for my Population Institute job. They're abolishing my vice chancellorship.”

So after being interviewed by about 20 people in a period of a week, I was appointed by the Board of Regents of the University of Hawaii to be the Assistant Director for Administration of the Population Institute. Of course, that was before Equal Employment Opportunity ground rules came into being; otherwise, I probably wouldn't have done it quite as quickly. But nonetheless, I went to work and had a most enjoyable period. But what I discovered most—and I think this is the important part from the USIA point of view, and I've told several USIA directors who have stopped at the East West Center

about this experience and this belief—the programs at East West Center are based on working together. More than that, they're based on working together on things that you're both interested in, instead of doing it the way we do it in USIA. We send out a message, sort of like shooting an arrow into the air; we send out a message whether other people are interested in it or not. I think the result that shows at East West Center is that you have a continuing concern. You can have disagreements, but you have a continuing willingness to work together when you know that you've got a problem that you both believe needs to be solved. And that's the way they're going at it at the East West Center. Thirty-thousand people have passed through those programs, but not all of them had the kind of experience they're having today. Since 1969, when the first problem-oriented institute was formed, that was when they began to work together on common problems. So we've only had about just under 20 years of experience with it.

Q: You're still a Fellow, are you not?

ADAMSON: I'm still a Fellow. I don't do enough work anymore to accept money and still have a clear conscience, but I do have an office there. I do stay involved, and I am enjoying it very much.

Q: So you have been associated with the Population Center 15, 16 years?

ADAMSON: Since May 1971.

Q: That's a long time.

ADAMSON: Almost 17 years. In other words, you know, in the Foreign Service you get brainwashed. The idea of mandatory retirement is 60, so when I hit 60 up here, I kept saying, “I've got to retire.” And they said, “No, you can't retire yet.” So I held on and I held on. But I finally, in '83, retired.

Honorary Consul for Chile

Q: You are also the Honorary Consul for Chile. How long have you been doing that?

ADAMSON: Since February 1982.

Q: That's an interesting job.

ADAMSON: We had a Pan Pacific Conference at East West Center. The Pan Pacific community in the East Coast, with a few congressmen, held that meeting here to talk about U.S. and the Asia Pacific area. I was an observer, and the fellow sitting next to me was an observer, turned out to be a retired U.S. Army colonel, who was the honorary consul for Chile. His Uncle Claude Bowers had been U.S. ambassador to Chile for 12 years, something like that, and one of his kids married a Chileno. So he had good contacts with Chile. Then when he had to move to Florida, he asked me to take over the job, and since he recommended me, that was why I got it. At the time, I had spent 24 hours in Santiago, Chile, while I was at the Voice of America. That was the extent of my qualifications.

Q: Your USIA experience must have been helpful for things like, I remember last year you and your wife Robin were involved with the visit of a beautiful tall ship from Chile.

ADAMSON: That is correct. We had a lot of public interest. We had open ship and crowds of people coming to see it. It is a beautiful ship. Of course, the captain of the ship wants to have a party on board so the midshipmen, on their final cruise before they are commissioned, can dance with pretty girls. So I got the help of the Hawaii International Hospitality Center and a few other places and a lot of ladies accepted an invitation to come aboard to dance, but the number had to be limited according to the captain, as a result of which a great many members of the Chilean community weren't invited, and my name was mud for a long time. I got them invited to be aboard ship for a morning reception, and at that time, then, the captain had an opportunity to tell them that it was not my doing, it was his party. So I got off hook on that one.

Q: One thing, Keith. Being here in Honolulu for these many years now, the people from the Agency, the State Department, from the posts, whatever, all stream through here, and you've been sort of an ex-officio representative for the Agency. Certainly all these years, you see everybody that comes and goes pretty much.

ADAMSON: One of my big problems is that most everybody who comes and goes these days are all so young, they're brand-new. I haven't met them before. When I first retired, it was wonderful seeing all my old friends as they went to and from their posts in the area. Some of those who have retired in the Washington area, where, of course, things are happening all the time and who are very much involved, like yourself, can't understand how we could feel that we are still involved being way out here in the middle of the Pacific. But it's amazing how much is going on. Read the Governor's State of the State address yesterday, which I attended in my consular corps role. He is pushing for Hawaii to become even more involved, both politically and culturally and so on with the Pacific islands and with the nations of Asia. Trade is a big area for promotion. And at the East West Center, obviously, we have a constant flow of people from all over the U.S. and from Asia and the Pacific, and the programs there are stimulating, they're interesting, and it's quite easy to get involved in as many things as you would in Washington, maybe more.

Q: Is there still a reception center here for visitors?

ADAMSON: There is a reception center here, and it's down in the federal building. Right across the hall from that reception center, which handles, of course, official visitors, is the regional public affairs office, headed by Lou Polichetti, with an assistant, Mike Mingo. They are responsible for all of the Pacific island countries where we do not have a post.

Q: That's interesting.

ADAMSON: So they're traveling all the time. Of course, don't forgot we have Tom Marquis, who is an advisor to the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Command, your old job.

Q: Yes. What I think we'll do, Keith, is we will stop this here. First of all, you've got to run down to the governor's office in a minute. But also you mentioned that you had some further thoughts that had been stirred up about some of this, so why don't you, on your own, add whatever you want to the rest of this tape.

ADAMSON: Yes. I neglected a few things with respect to the situation in Colombia and in Egypt and Turkey, as well. I thought I should go back and pick those up where I had some second thoughts, plus the fact that I was thinking this morning, some of the funniest things that have happened. Remember Jack Pickering was the area director for the Far East?

Q: Yes.

ADAMSON: He was up at the hearings. His retirement had already been announced, and so our nemesis and friend, Rooney, congressman from New York, was giving Jack Pickering the opportunity to put anything he wanted favorable to the Agency into the record. It was a love feast for Jack's departure. And so he said, “Tell me, what do you think is one of the most important accomplishments you've had here in the last year since we were up here?”

And he said, “Oh, it was the restructuring of the program in Korea.” I think it was.

And he said, “Oh, well, what was wrong with it before?”

And Jack said, “Nothing.” And they just dropped the whole topic. That was one I loved.

End of interview